

Soldiers, Scholars, Diplomats:  
Educating Strategic Leaders at Foreign Staff Colleges

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

**Soldiers, Scholars, Diplomats: Educating Strategic Leaders at Foreign Staff Colleges, by MAJ Christopher M. Gin, 63 pages.**

This monograph examines the value added to the US Army by sending officers to foreign staff colleges. It argues that the US Army should educate more of its best field grade officers abroad to gain worldly, contextual intelligence. Ultimately, a foreign staff college experience, preceded by the US Army's Command and General Staff College resident course, will develop better strategic thinkers and leaders. In this research, General Albert C. Wedemeyer's personal archives at Stanford University provide keen insight into the strategic contribution officers educated abroad can have on national security. Next, a survey of US Army officers who graduated from a foreign staff college in the last ten years confirms several valuable aspects of an overseas education, and identifies areas of the program to improve. Finally, this monograph recommends increasing the available opportunities for US Army officers to attend foreign staff colleges, with a weighted priority in Asia and Europe. It also recommends sending the top 10% of each year's graduating CGSC class, approximately 100 officers, to foreign language training followed by a foreign staff college education. This benefits the US Army by growing the pool of organizational leaders who can readily contextualize the challenges of a complex world beyond American borders.

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Finally, I dedicate this monograph to our daughter, Tori: May your pursuit of knowledge and educational endeavors take you all over the wide world.

## Acronyms

AMSP	Advanced Military Studies Program
ASCC	Army Service Component Command
ASP3	Advanced Strategic Planning and Policy Program
CAC-LD&E	Combined Arms Center - Leader Development and Education
COCOM	Combatant Command
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
DLPT	Defense Language Proficiency Test
HQDA	Headquarters, Department of the Army
HRC	Human Resources Command
ILE	Intermediate Level Education
IMSD	International Military Student Division
KD	Key Developmental
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PME	Professional Military Education
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
SON	Schools of Other Nations
TA	Theater Army

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## Introduction

Education is the most reliable strategic investment that the Army can make in the face of an uncertain future.

—*The Army University White Paper*, February 2015

The US Army officer Professional Military Education (PME) system underscores the organization's investment in its people. Scholarships are available to four-year universities and military academies, civilian graduate schools, and a plethora of other educational opportunities during a typical twenty-year career. Why does the Department of Defense choose to spend millions of dollars to educate officers beyond the training required for managing violence in warfare? The answer, perhaps, lies in the Army's role in American foreign policy and national security in a complex world. America exports its values, both in times of war and peace, through the US Army's presence around the world. The global audience may form its opinion of America through interactions with soldiers stationed permanently, or temporarily, abroad.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the actions of US servicemen and women abroad have the potential to affect national security interests worldwide, and also leave an enduring impression of American power in the minds of others. Perhaps one way of positively influencing the strategic narrative and cultivating American power abroad is through a more deliberate investment in the education of US Army officers based on the potential for strategic return. The purpose of this study is to investigate this dynamic by assessing an important aspect of the officer education system: The attendance of US Army officers at foreign military staff colleges.

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 188-189. As Simpson points out, a nation's strategic narrative should engage an audience through the domains of rationale, emotional persuasion, as well as through one's own moral standing.

The study asks: To what extent would increasing the number of US Army officers sent abroad to foreign staff colleges add value to the US Army? The hypothesis is that increasing the number of US Army officers sent to foreign staff colleges would add significant value to the organization by increasing the number of strategic leaders who have the knowledge and experience to contextualize complex, international systems with clarity and meaning for their organizations.<sup>2</sup>

Harvard strategic economist, Tarun Khanna, defines “contextual intelligence” as “the ability to understand the limits of our knowledge and to adapt that knowledge to an environment different from the one in which it was developed.”<sup>3</sup> This term appears frequently in this study as *the* desired skill graduates of foreign staff colleges ought to acquire while abroad. Secondary benefits of the education include personal relationships with foreign military peers, foreign language training and proficiency, and exposure to innovative education and training methods, but even Training and Doctrine Command Commander, General David Perkins, recently stressed, “Leaders have to contextualize the world for their subordinates.”<sup>4</sup> This study also argues that the experience of attending a foreign staff college adds value to the US Army through soft power gains, as described in Joseph Nye’s 2004 book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. The concept of “soft power” and its evolution into “smart power” are discussed later in this section. The monograph evaluates the extent to which increasing attendance at foreign staff

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<sup>2</sup> Foreign staff colleges are defined and limited in this study to those schools in other nations that train mid-career, field grade officers for further service, and are not to be combined with national war colleges that typically educate more senior officers.

<sup>3</sup> Tarun Khanna, “A Case for Contextual Intelligence,” *Management International Review (MIR)*, April 2015, Vol. 55, Issue 2, pages 181-190. Also, “Contextual Intelligence,” *Harvard Business Review*, 92(5), September 2014, 58-68.

<sup>4</sup> David G. Perkins, speech at the Army Management Staff College, 12 January 2015 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Public Affairs Office), accessed 5 October 2015, [http://www.army.mil/article/141035/TRADOC\\_Commander\\_address\\_Army\\_Civilians/](http://www.army.mil/article/141035/TRADOC_Commander_address_Army_Civilians/).

colleges adds value to the US Army by educating more senior leaders who can apply their contextual intelligence to influence better national security decisions.

Since the aftermath of the Spanish-American War of 1898, the US Army's forward presence has kept the organization at the tip of US diplomacy, both as a security guarantor at global fault lines, as well as the physical manifestation of US might and interests. For example, for nearly seventy years on the Korean peninsula, US forces have stood as a deterrent to North Korean aggression and as a committed ally to the Republic of South Korea. In Europe, US forces in coordination with NATO continue to bolster Europe's defense amidst fears of a resurgent Russia.<sup>5</sup> As the United States' international commitments grow and threats arise, it is essential that organizational leaders in the US Army be comfortable operating in the world beyond America's borders. Since nearly all US Army officers are graduates of American universities, it can be reasonably assumed that few of those officers received undergraduate or graduate education abroad prior to joining the US Army. Many find themselves living abroad for the first time when on an operational deployment, and are forced to simultaneously experience the stress of a real-world mission and the anxiety of cultural dissonance.

In order to better prepare the US Army for its continued role in American public diplomacy, creating more leaders who are educated in how foreign systems and societies work may help fill a crucial void in leaders' ability to contextualize the world in which the United States interacts. A 2003 report from the Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College identified six metacompetencies that strategic leaders should possess: identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior, and professional astuteness.<sup>6</sup> It

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Milley, *Hearing to Consider the Nomination of General Mark A. Milley, USA, to be Chief of Staff of the Army* (Washington, DC: US Senate Committee on Armed Services, 21 July 2015), 31.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard Wong, Stephen J. Gerras, William Kidd, Robert Pricone, Richard Swengros, "Strategic Leadership Competencies" (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 5-9.

concludes that officers should achieve these competencies through deliberate assignments that foster growth in these areas.<sup>7</sup> This monograph explores how an experience abroad at a foreign staff college may significantly help officers develop these metacompetencies, as well as soft power leverage, thereby making a valuable return on the Army's investment in their education.

*The Army Operating Concept* published in October 2014 emphasizes the complex world in which the US Army is one of many actors.<sup>8</sup> As such, the US Army may derive significant benefits from officers it deliberately sends abroad to be educated in regions where they can then be assigned to serve. Specifically, graduate level education at foreign staff colleges may provide officers with an intimate understanding of allied and associated states' military organizations and capabilities. However, more importantly, such an experience may shed light on the "fear, honor, and interests" of others that are more easily ascertained through significant interaction.<sup>9</sup> Senior leaders depend on their subordinates to draw clarity from unclear information and help direct organizational action in an efficacious manner.<sup>10</sup> Foreign staff college graduates may be a valuable conduit who can collectively contribute a high degree of contextual intelligence in various international environments. If foreign staff college graduates' experience does indeed add

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, 2020-2040* (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, Robert B. Strassler, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 43.

<sup>10</sup> David G. Perkins, "Army Operating Concept: Delivering the Future," *Army Magazine*, (11 November 14: 65-70): 68. Indeed, the top two future concerns for success in a complex world, according to General David G. Perkins, Commander of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command, both reside in the human dimension. They are, "Optimizing soldier and team performance," and, "Developing adaptive and innovative leaders and institutions to understand and operate in complex environments," respectively.

value, it ought to be reflected in the way they articulate meaning in a complex, interactive world to their subordinates, leaders, and organizations.

#### Framework for Assessing Value

Value is difficult to ascertain, but the following case study and survey aim to clarify some of the important, but intangible benefits of foreign staff college education. Several prominent works also aid in the analysis. In order to assess the value of the program, Nye's concept of soft power is a useful frame to show how the US Army might be innovative in its approach to increasing national power. Nye defines soft power as, "The ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments."<sup>11</sup> Organizations and citizens unaffiliated with the US government typically fare better at increasing soft power, and the US Army does not command soft power in the way it does hard power (e.g. the means for conducting warfare).<sup>12</sup> However, the military's ability to wield soft power could potentially exceed other public diplomacy institutions because of the broad range of interactions it sponsors, like staff college exchanges, which provide substantial time for interaction between key individuals of different countries.<sup>13</sup> If US Army officers sent abroad are able to increase the United States' net soft power, it will likely be through positive interactions with foreigners. That soft power is realized when others act with preferred behaviors that are more congruent to US interests than they would have without significant interaction with Americans. Therefore, US Army officers, as agents of the government at foreign

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power and Higher Education," *Educause Review* (January 2005): 34.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-48.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 116-117.

staff colleges and in foreign societies, have the opportunity to reinforce or squander soft power gains by how well they attract their host-nation audience.<sup>14</sup>

Military power, as Nye shows, typically falls onto the hard power end of the spectrum as a resource that underlies the behaviors of coercion or inducement to make the receiver do what the actor wants. Figure 1 displays Nye's spectrum of power to show the range of behaviors and resources one can employ to gain hard or soft power. Like Khanna, Nye stresses the uniqueness of each new situation, and that exercising power depends on context.<sup>15</sup> Context determines how the United States might best apply hard and soft power to influence others' behavior.

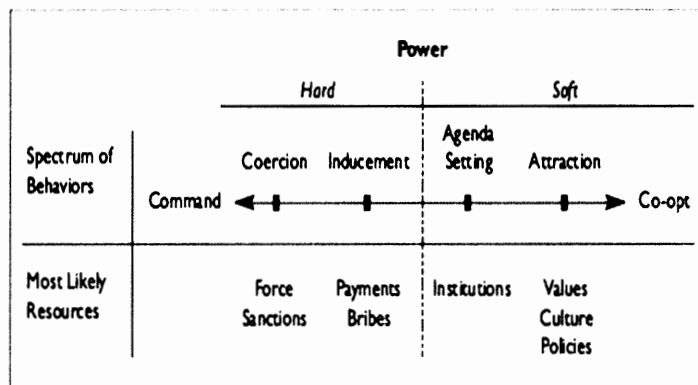


Figure 1. Nye's Spectrum of Power

Source: Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power and Higher Education," *Educause Review* (January 2005): 40.<sup>16</sup>

In his later work, *The Future of Power*, Nye goes on to explain that the effects of soft power rely on the hard power potential of the actor, and targets the broad public opinion and

<sup>14</sup> Nye, "Soft Power and Higher Education," 46.

<sup>15</sup> Nye, "Soft Power and Higher Education," 48.

<sup>16</sup> Foreign staff college attendees are not in a position to exercise the hard power typically associated with military force, nor should they be while in their roles as students. However, their presence and interaction with other students creates an ideal space to engage foreign actors and systems on the soft power side of the spectrum through attraction and values.

cultural attitudes of others.<sup>17</sup> US Army involvement as a resource on the soft power side of the spectrum ought to be amplified, and foreign staff colleges offer an opportunity to do so. Each US Army officer-student sent abroad serves simultaneously as a soldier, scholar, and diplomat in a foreign country. When not involved in hard power operations, US Army officers have the potential to build the country's soft power influence. US Army officers know how to apply hard power, but many could stand to increase their ability to further US security interests through exercising more soft power. Attending a foreign staff college gives officers an opportunity to do just that. Ultimately, "smart power", to use another of Nye's terms, is the contextual and dynamic application of both hard and soft power that foreign staff college graduates can apply in their future jobs.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to Khanna and Nye's works, Carol Atkinson's book *Military Soft Power: Public Diplomacy through Military Educational Exchanges* and several of her articles on the topic of military public diplomacy, serve as a starting point for this study. Her primary work focused on the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program and its goals. IMET is the US government's primary funder for various education and training programs for foreign military personnel studying in the United States.<sup>19</sup> She concludes that US Government investment in foreign military officers' attendance at US staff colleges is well worth the return for several reasons.<sup>20</sup> This study replicates some of her methodology for measuring soft power return on investment for the United States.

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 94-97.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>19</sup> Carol Atkinson, *Military Soft Power: Public Diplomacy through Military Educational Exchanges* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 13.

<sup>20</sup> Atkinson, 163-164. Atkinson concludes that international officers who attend the US Army CGSC have higher potential for promotion to the highest echelons of their militaries. Those officers and their families take with them ideas and perceptions of American society that can influence their nation's foreign policy towards the United States in the future.

Atkinson's work focuses on foreign officers in the United States, in contrast this monograph focuses on quantifying the value of sending US Army officers abroad. Her survey of foreign attendees to US military staff colleges indicates an increase in America's soft power, but does not explore US officers soft power leverage gained while studying at foreign staff colleges.<sup>21</sup> It goes further to justify that the IMET program allows America to "engage in the 'war of ideas', build its own soft power, and promote democracy, soldier by soldier."<sup>22</sup> This study uses her methodology as a model framework for interpreting soft power value of the School of Other Nations (SON) program. It also attempts to further capture the value of public diplomacy through military educational exchanges abroad, and perhaps enable US Army officers to further the cause of "liberal norm diffusion" through lasting relationships with peers, especially those from authoritative states.<sup>23</sup>

## Organization

This monograph is organized into five sections including this introductory section. The next section, Section Two, discusses lessons learned through case study of an individual officer, US Army General Albert C. Wedemeyer, who attended the German *Kriegsakademie* prior to World War II. It evaluates the impact of his foreign staff college experience on his operational and strategic leadership during and after World War II. Wedemeyer's most recognizable contributions to national security were his assistance with authoring the strategic plan, known as the Victory Program, for defeating Nazi Germany, followed by his time as a multinational leader

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<sup>21</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 8. Nye argues that soft power comes "from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles relations with others."

<sup>22</sup> Atkinson, 165.

<sup>23</sup> Carol Atkinson, "Does Soft Power Matter? A Comparative Analysis of Student Exchange Programs 1980-2006," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, no. 6 (2010): 1-22.

in Southeast Asia and China.<sup>24</sup> Wedemeyer's experience at the *Kriegsakademie* helped to develop his strategic intuition that he applied during and after World War II, specifically his unique ability to contextualize a strategy for the various organizations in which he served and is noteworthy for its immediate and lasting effect on national security. The purpose of the case study is to illustrate the strategic impacts that could potentially stem from more officers being educated at foreign staff colleges.

Section Three introduces the background and rationale for the current program in order to explore whether or not expanding the program is a worthwhile investment. It describes how the program is administered, how the officers are selected, and examines some of the most salient challenges to selecting the most-qualified officers. By contrast, most top-performing officers who do not attend a foreign ILE will typically attend the resident CGSC course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This section also examines some of the opportunity costs to send officers abroad for ILE instead of having them attend a US school. US Army PME publications serve as a base reference to determine what abilities the US Army expects of its officers in terms of understanding and interacting with a complex world. Unclassified statistical data from the SON and US Army Human Resources Command (HRC) also provide background information and help analyze the current program's results.

Section Four includes objective and subjective survey feedback from nearly 100 officers who participated in the SON program in the last decade, most of whom are still serving on active duty. Its purpose is to test the hypothesis of whether or not the current program adds value to the US Army. This study uses a survey research model as described by Arlene Fink, PhD, in *How to Conduct Surveys*.<sup>25</sup> A self-administered online survey technique using a Department of Defense

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<sup>24</sup> Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 1-3.

<sup>25</sup> Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 67.

approved web-based design software called Verint was employed with the approval of the Fort Leavenworth Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research (See Appendix 5).

Participants answered a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions to reflect on the impacts of their experiences to both their careers and their contributions to the US Army.

Analysis of the surveys provides mainly qualitative data and insight into the participant experience, and test the hypothesis of value to the US Army by exploring common themes.

Section Five provides synthesis, conclusions, and recommendations based on the research finding that foreign staff college attendance adds significant value to the US Army. Of those who responded to the survey, 95% who participated in the SON program in the last ten years felt the US Army gained value from their experience. Based on the research, the author recommends a variety of novel approaches to capitalize on the program's potential. First, work with partner nations to increase the opportunities to attend foreign staff colleges to at least 100 seats worldwide per year, particularly in Asia and Europe. Second, explicitly expand the SON charter to include contextual intelligence as the skill graduates of foreign staff colleges should possess upon completion. Third, make resident CGSC, rather than current language proficiency, the first prerequisite to apply for a foreign staff college education. Fourth, allow the top 10% of each graduating CGSC class – approximately 100 officers per year - to be automatically eligible for foreign language training and foreign staff college attendance. Fifth, conduct a strategic messaging campaign to garner senior leader and career manager support to improve the US Army's perception of the program.

## Echoes from the Past

The minds inside the bullet heads of the *Wehrmacht* officers hit the receptive mind of the U.S. captain with the impact of a robomb. German officers, he found, were less flexible than U.S. military men but they lived, breathed and dreamed war. They understood war as politics and peace as politics.

—*Time Magazine*, 4 June 1945

From 1936-1938, then-Captain Albert C. Wedemeyer studied diligently to comprehend the military theory taught at the German Staff College in Berlin, known the world over as the *Kriegsakademie*. His experience far from American shores, at the heart of what would become Nazi Germany's Army amongst German peers and instructors, left an indelible impression on Wedemeyer. It would underpin his understanding of how Nazi Germany approached, planned, and executed operations. What he learned about the German Army's war of movement and what would be termed *blitzkrieg* operations informed senior American leaders and added to Wedemeyer's credibility as one of few American officers who possessed contextual intelligence that could be applied against Nazi Germany.<sup>26</sup>

Though Wedemeyer's education at the *Kriegsakademie* preceded the United States' entry into World War II, the likelihood of future hostilities were apparent to the young American officer during his time as a student. In addition to improving his mastery of German, he took every opportunity to gather information for a comprehensive report on the modern German Army.<sup>27</sup> Most importantly, his report and interviews with US Army leaders upon his return to the United States showed that his contextual intelligence about Nazi Germany would help inform American strategy in ways both meaningful and efficacious in pursuit of ultimate victory.

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<sup>26</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 35, "Captain Wedemeyer Report on the *Kriegsakademie*," July 11, 1938, page 12, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>27</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 35, "Captain Wedemeyer Report on the *Kriegsakademie*," July 11, 1938, page 68 of 143, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson acknowledged the direct value of Wedemeyer's foreign staff college education upon America's war plans to defeat Germany, stating:

[Wedemeyer] was a student at the German Staff School from 1936 to 1938 and has furnished our Staff with much valuable information about German methods. I have found that among certain gossips in Washington such a connection is enough to make a man suspected but without such first hand information as to what the Germans are doing we should be badly off indeed.<sup>28</sup>

Chief of the War Plans Division, Brigadier General George C. Marshall, took a particular interest in Wedemeyer's final report from his foreign staff college experience, and quickly ordered Wedemeyer to serve on his staff and help write the Victory Program for Nazi Germany's defeat.<sup>29</sup> Wedemeyer's experience, discussed in this section, illustrates the value that foreign staff college education had on notable strategic leader, and serves as an example of how foreign military schooling can contribute to success in military operations.

### Life and Legacy

Albert C. Wedemeyer grew up in Omaha, Nebraska. Originally, Wedemeyer aspired to pursue a healthcare profession, but as a teenager, he jumped at the opportunity to attend the US Military Academy at West Point, even as World War I raged in Europe.<sup>30</sup> Although not a top-ranking cadet, he graduated in 1919 and was commissioned in the infantry. His early career was

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<sup>28</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 71, Folder 6, "Henry L. Stimson letter to President Roosevelt," 2 March 1942, Hoover Institution Archives. Stimson also said of Wedemeyer, "Colonel Wedemeyer is one of the very best officers we have in the General Staff. He is the right hand man of the Chief of the War Plans Division and has the confidence of everybody from Marshall down," underlining the effectiveness of an educated, but, relatively, junior officer.

<sup>29</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 35, "Memorandum to Colonel Eiler," 9 April 1985," preface page to "Captain Wedemeyer Report on the Kriegsakademie," July 11, 1938, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>30</sup> Keith E. Eiler papers, 1808-2003, Box 1, Folder 4, "American Heritage", Interview by Keith E. Eiler with General AC Wedemeyer draft of 29 November 1982, Hoover Institution Archives.

typical and included an assignment as an aide to the commandant of the Infantry School, before he sought his initial overseas posting.<sup>31</sup>

Wedemeyer's first operational assignment took him to the Philippines.<sup>32</sup> He later took an assignment in China and learned about the people and culture to which his legacy would be forever bound. Most notably, from 1941-1943, he served as the lead war planner on General Marshall's staff, followed by an assignment as Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander, Lord Louis Mountbatten, of the South East Asia Command (SEAC), and ultimately, as Commander of all American forces in China, while simultaneously serving as the Chief of Staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>33</sup> After the war, he spent much of his time advocating strict policies towards the Soviet Union and communist satellite states, which he saw as the greatest post-war threat to national security.<sup>34</sup> Based on his experiences living abroad, he recognized the

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<sup>31</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>32</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>33</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives. Keith E. Eiler papers, 1808-2003, Box 1, Folder 6, "Anti-Semitism", Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University (for Wedemeyer). In 1951, General Wedemeyer retired from active duty, but continued to be a staunch anti-Communist commentator, and supporter of the Republic of China on Taiwan. His later writings, both his official memoirs and correspondence in his archive files at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, reveal a contemplative man of steadfast character. He typically avoided confrontation in his private life though he did face accusations of being too sympathetic to the Germans, and possibly anti-Semitic.

However, his responses to such accusations displayed the spirit of his values and counter anti-Semitic claims. For example, when responding to the editorial chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, he stated, "[I] forcefully resent what you have said or implied," with regards to the latter indicating Wedemeyer as an anti-Semite for giving an endorsement of John Beaty's 1951 book *Iron Curtain Over America*. He went on to state, "Your letter is the most outrageous communication I have ever received in my life and I intend to give it the widest possible publicity, including my many Jewish friends."

<sup>34</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 7, Folder 30, "The Education of the United States Army," Wedemeyer Speech to the British Military Academy, 29 May 1947, Hoover Institution Archives.

effectiveness of the communist narrative and stressed the importance of an American counter-narrative. While speaking to a group of American officers at the National War College in 1949, he stated:

Most important: Reach the hearts and minds of our own and other peoples of the world through every possible media to insure that they understand and appreciate the peaceful objectives of our country as well as the dire implications of the Soviet totalitarian political and economic structure and aims.<sup>35</sup>

Wedemeyer retired from the service in 1951, but continued life in the public sphere as an outspoken advocate against communism. He took the opportunity to speak to various civil and governmental organizations about his thoughts on national strategy and published his memoirs in his 1957 book, *Wedemeyer Reports!*. As a testament to his lifetime appreciation for learning, he ultimately donated his archive of personal and professional files, along with their rights, to the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University.

#### The Education of a Strategic Leader

Like many US Army senior officers entrusted with the highest responsibility for the nation's defense, Wedemeyer was a product of his educational experiences. The foundation for his critical service and contribution to the Allied cause was his attendance at the *Kriegsakademie* from 1936-1938.<sup>36</sup> His experience in Berlin amongst America's future enemies, and the report he wrote upon his return, provided the basis of credibility, intellect, and leadership potential that senior officers identified as rare, but important traits needed to create a winning strategy. His foreign staff college experience added value to the US Army that would be converted into both hard and soft power.

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<sup>35</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 8, Folder 5, "U.S. Postwar Strategy," speech to the National War College, 17 February 1949, page 21, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>36</sup> Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 13-15.

Though promotions and combat opportunities slowed in the interwar period, the US Army selected Wedemeyer to attend the Command and General Staff College resident course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas from 1933-1935. In addition to excelling at the assigned studies, he set his sights early on the exchange program to the German Staff College awarded to one officer per class, following the completion of the Leavenworth course. Ever the planner, Wedemeyer made time while at Fort Leavenworth to study the German language using flashcards to improve his vocabulary, demonstrating to his senior officers that he possessed the ability to represent the US Army abroad.<sup>37</sup> His diligence paid off when the US Army ordered him to Berlin with his family to complete an additional two-year staff college course at the *Kriegsakademie*, known for educating the finest minds of the German general staff. The experience prepared him to be a strategic leader by providing two years of cultural immersion in Germany, a better understanding of American interests beyond the US military establishment, and an advanced military education amongst an equally impressive international cohort.

Life at the *Kriegsakademie* was idyllic, even as the clouds of war gathered on the continent. Early on, Wedemeyer recognized the societal differences between America and Germany. Shortly after their arrival in 1936, he and his family attended the controversial Olympic Games hosted by the Nazis in Berlin in order to, “urge our stalward [*sic*][*recte* stalwart] (varied in color) athletes to victory.”<sup>38</sup> Dealing with daily Nazi propaganda was part of the immersion experience, and helped Wedemeyer understand what conditioned the minds of the German military and civilians alike. This contextual intelligence would prove useful on his later assignment as a war planner. With regard to the propaganda, he commented:

It is difficult to understand why people are so gullible and naive. I can only relate my experience when I lived in Germany two years prior to the last war. There

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<sup>37</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>38</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Envelope AA, Postcard dated 16 September 1936 to Mr. and Mrs. Walter Robertson, Hoover Institution Archives.

I experienced daily - hourly the Nazi propaganda program through all types of media, for example, radio, press, etc. Occasionally I had to jolt myself because I found myself beginning to believe or to accept some of the premises that were established by Hitler's propaganda, particularly propaganda directed against other countries. And this in spite of the means and the opportunities that I had available to know the truth and to evaluate rationally the true conditions of the world.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to immersion in a foreign society, Wedemeyer had opportunities to interact with various representatives from his own government. He developed a close friendship with his senior officer, Truman Smith, who at the time was the American Military Attaché assigned to the embassy in Berlin. Smith and his wife took the Wedemeyers under their wing, and Truman Smith ordered Wedemeyer not to speak any English while in Germany in order to perfect his fluency, a task the latter found difficult, but one which paid dividends socially, as well as in the classroom.<sup>40</sup> Wedemeyer looked up to Smith and described him as a, "tactful, keen analyst...[who] deservedly won the admiration and respect of Germans and other foreign representatives."<sup>41</sup> He fondly recalled an instance when American Ambassador William Dodd walked by the two of them at an embassy event and asked, "What are you doing, Major Smith? Hatching up a war?" To which Truman Smith quipped, "Oh no, Mr. Ambassador, you diplomats hatch up the wars, we fight them."<sup>42</sup> The exchange experience for Wedemeyer was not just about learning at the *Kriegsakademie*, but also learning how to further American interests while living in a foreign society.

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<sup>39</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 8, Folder 5, "U.S. Postwar Strategy," speech to the National War College, 17 February 1949, page 19, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>41</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 25, "Untitled Writing on Truman Smith," Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>42</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 25, "Untitled Writing on Truman Smith," Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

Though Wedemeyer would rise in rank and influence far above Smith in the years to come, his interaction with this fellow American officer coached him to deal with other government representatives with an uncommon tact. It is likely that during his education abroad, he came up with his definition of strategy as, "The art and science of employing all the nation's resources to accomplish objectives defined by national policies," which would require more than just "naked military force."<sup>43</sup> Being a student at a foreign staff college afforded Wedemeyer access to officials at the embassy who embodied the many facets of American government interests. The lessons learned from Truman Smith and others in Germany about how to balance broad national interests certainly influenced how Wedemeyer would act a decade later in his role as the senior military commander of US forces in China and advisor to the Chinese Nationalists. Through sponsorship and exposure to the broader national mission in a foreign country, foreign staff college students may better learn to contextualize their role in furthering broader national objectives. Upon their return to the US Army, they may be prepared to more efficaciously influence their organization's actions in a whole-of-government system. The opportunity also allows students, like Wedemeyer, to build relationships with other governmental agency representatives, and increase the career-long discourse between bureaucrats in disparate departments.

In the classroom at the *Kriegsakademie*, politics were generally avoided, but Wedemeyer empathized with the difficulty some of his German instructors and classmates faced as Nazi fervor swept through the country.<sup>44</sup> He made perceptive observations regarding his German hosts.

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<sup>43</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, letter to President Chang Chi-yun, 15 July 1977, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>44</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 10, Folder 31, "Observations on a trip in Europe, 1957 Feb-March," Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University. There is evidence that General Wedemeyer regained contact with several of his classmates and instructors after the war, and even visited them in 1957 to hear their thoughts on the military strategy employed during the war. In a scene he describes his 1957 trip to Germany where he meets with General Franz Halder, then the German Wartime Chief of Staff and several other ex-German

Perhaps his most prescient insight was the German emphasis on commanders who were, “Resolute, but not obstinate,” and able to adjust to changes in the situation.<sup>45</sup> Classroom and field instruction also convinced him that the Germans would not, “Fight another war similar to World War I...the equipment, the tactics, and the techniques were all now in the German Army and based on...high mobility.”<sup>46</sup> After two years of living and learning with the most innovative minds of the German Army, Wedemeyer gathered his observations and analysis into a 143-page report. It detailed a spectrum of German war-fighting philosophy that stretched from general theories of war at the strategic level, aircraft formations at the operational level, and even the tactical personnel and equipment tables down to battalion-sized units.<sup>47</sup> This painstaking endeavor showcased his attention to detail and his ability to focus on what senior planners would need to know in order to defeat such a formidable and disciplined foe.

The most immediate return on investment from his education was the value Wedemeyer added to planning the defeat of Germany on the War Plans Division staff. Having impressed General George C. Marshall, Wedemeyer’s career was on a fast-track to promotion and increased

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officers. He recounts how Colonel Truman Smith, known to Halder as an American Military Attaché in Berlin before the war, suggested that he and Wedemeyer approach their German friends through neutral Switzerland in an attempt to bring about an early end to the war.

This “what if” scenario begets an emotional response from Halder who Wedemeyer empathizes with and offers an understanding of the difficult choice faced by generals in war, and even likens the choice to that of American officers in 1860 and 61, who had to choose between their duties as officers and their personal, political loyalties. Of note, Claus von Stauffenberg, who was executed for attempting to assassinate Hitler in 1944, was also one of Wedemeyer’s classmates at the *Kriegsakademie* and represented the faction of German officers who unsuccessfully attempted to rid their nation of the Nazi tyrant.

<sup>45</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 35, “Captain Wedemeyer Report on the *Kriegsakademie*,” July 11, 1938, 68, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>46</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 35, “Captain Wedemeyer Report on the *Kriegsakademie*,” July 11, 1938, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>47</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 35, “Captain Wedemeyer Report on the *Kriegsakademie*,” July 11, 1938, Hoover Institution Archives.

responsibility. He later told would-be, future planners that, “The strategic planner notes the capabilities of other nations and makes a comparative appraisal of his own available resources, and thus evolves flexible plans for the attainment of national objectives.”<sup>48</sup> His time at the *Kriegsakademie* allowed him the first-hand opportunity to make note of German capabilities and doctrine that would have otherwise been based on conjecture, intelligence estimates, or through second-hand information sources. Because he was able to build a working, subject-matter expertise on the enemy from his experiences at their staff college, he was able to contribute to the strategic planning process better than his peers. Were it not for this unique opportunity and the knowledge manifested in Wedemeyer’s report, it is unlikely that General Marshall would have hand-selected Wedemeyer in 1939 for such a high position on the War Plans Division staff. Wedemeyer’s insights went beyond just manning and equipment, and spoke to soul of the enemy he had come to know.

In addition to studying the Germans, Wedemeyer interacted with a close group of international officers, also sent by their various countries to the *Kriegsakademie*. His cohort of international officers distributed amongst one hundred twenty German students included four Argentinians, two Chinese, one Japanese, one Turkish, one Italian, one Bulgarian, and, as he referred to himself, “Omaha’s delegate.”<sup>49</sup> Together they took part in classroom instruction and field problems, which allowed them opportunities to bond as a class, share their military expertise backgrounds, and practice their German.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, it can reasonably be inferred that his

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<sup>48</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 8, Folder 5, “U.S. Postwar Strategy,” speech to the National War College, 17 February 1949, 5, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>49</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Envelope AA, Photograph of officers in uniform with names and country of origin written on the back, taken at Maneuver Grounds near Grafenwehr, 3 September 1937, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>50</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

interaction with both the Chinese and Japanese exchange officers informed his views on the quality of their respective professional forces. As a representative of the US Army, Wedemeyer engaged socially with his German and international classmates by inviting them to dine with his family in their home on a nightly basis and consciously fostered his soft power through cultural exchange.<sup>51</sup>

Wedemeyer's contemporary critics accused him of being overly sympathetic to Germany following the war, and his official reports do indeed indicate that he opposed unconditional surrender terms for Germany based on his understanding of German society. The Treaty of Paris following World War I left Europe without true reconciliation following that great conflict. Specifically, the acceptance of guilt and reparations forced on German society provided the tinder of discontent that Hitler ignited with a flamethrower. At the Casablanca conference in 1943, Wedemeyer drew on his experience living in interwar Germany when he wrote:

When General Marshall gave me an opportunity to express my views concerning unconditional surrender I elaborated considerably on the subject, pointing out that the German people would have no way to turn whatsoever from their unscrupulous leaders and their dictators and that unconditional surrender would be interpreted by the vast numbers of German people as the Allies final decision and they would have no opportunity whatsoever to oppose Hitler except to follow him on down the line to his abject defeat.<sup>52</sup>

Wedemeyer's distaste for unconditional surrender was a result of his contextual intelligence, gained by his time in German society, rather than a naive sympathy for the enemy. In this instance, his insight was that unconditional surrender would not resonate with the German people in the same way Allied leaders envisioned, and that more suitable terms should be reached. He later apologized to Marshall for being so candid and vehement in his opposition to

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<sup>51</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>52</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 17, "Untitled fragment on the Casablanca Conference," January 1943, pages 23-26, Hoover Institution Archives.

unconditional surrender, but the latter stopped him abruptly, and said, “Wedemeyer, don’t you ever fail to speak up and give me the benefit of your thinking, you would be doing me a disservice if you did otherwise.”<sup>53</sup> Wedemeyer’s understanding that defeat was only certain if it resonated with the defeated again speaks to the general’s appreciation for the efficacy of post-bellum solutions. By this time in his career, Wedemeyer’s intuition should not be completely attributed to his experience at the *Kriegsakademie*, but given the context, the experience likely played an integral part of his rationale. Furthermore, the confidence he enjoyed from senior leaders indicates that others also valued his contextual intelligence. His analysis often merited senior leaders’ reconsideration of their own actions through Wedemeyer’s lens.

Wedemeyer’s appreciation for different ways to apply American power in multinational settings continued throughout his career. When he briefed General Douglas MacArthur following the Casablanca Conference about the strategic way ahead, MacArthur was impressed by Wedemeyer’s resume, which indicated “a finely trained mind.”<sup>54</sup> Wedemeyer’s US Army staff college experience at Fort Leavenworth would not likely have piqued MacArthur’s interest as unique for an experienced staff officer. The fine training of Wedemeyer’s mind that established his credibility with General MacArthur, and others, was more likely his atypical place and timing of his foreign staff college education. In 1944, while serving as the Commander of all American forces in China, Wedemeyer evaluated the quality of Chinese generals in Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Army, and held the highest regard for a general who, like himself, had been educated at a foreign staff college.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 17, “Untitled fragment on the Casablanca Conference,” January 1943, page 25, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>54</sup> Keith E. Eiler papers, 1808-2003, Box 1, Folder 14, “Casablanca”, To Casablanca conference and around the World report by LTG A.C. Wedemeyer, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 6, Folder 27, “Untitled Writing on Chiang Kai-Shek,” Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University. When commenting on his foreign counterparts while working as Chiang’s Chief of Staff, Wedemeyer commented that he

Wedemeyer's experience is similar to those available in today's foreign staff college exchange programs where US Army officers may interact with students from countries with whom the United States does not have an official exchange program. Even if not at a potential enemy's staff college, a similar understanding of allies is important. Interaction at staff colleges offers an opportunity for soft power influence, and may even provide placement and access to information that future US Army leaders may otherwise not encounter in such a personal way. The value of the education is manifested in those graduates who draw on their experiences to make significant contributions during their careers.

### Summary

The US Army benefitted directly by investing in Wedemeyer's foreign staff college education. It seeded the investment by first selecting an officer who was operationally experienced abroad and who excelled at the US Army staff college. Wedemeyer then showed an aptitude for the target foreign language prior to his selection, in this case German, and also endeavored to improve his fluency while at the foreign staff college. His concerted effort to maintain ties with those at the embassy helped him understand American interests through the lens of other government agencies. His interaction with classmates at the *Kriegsakademie* increased his ability to exercise American soft power through relationships that extended even after the war as his former classmates helped rebuild their nation with values scripted by American influence.<sup>56</sup>

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was, "not very much impressed with any of the Chinese generals," but in a nod to the value of staff college exchange, he does recognize, "Ho Shao-li was one of the younger officers who had trained in America, and was one of the best I knew. He went through staff college at Fort Leavenworth."

<sup>56</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 10, Folder 31, "Observations on a trip in Europe, 1957 Feb-March," Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University. There is an enduring respect between professionals of arms, indicative of the modern relationship American officers are expected to build with professional counterparts from allied forces. The relationships built at the *Kriegsakademie* course would extend the entirety of Wedemeyer's

However, Wedemeyer was not without shortcomings, and his reassignment to South East Asia as Lord Louis Montbatten's Chief of Staff in 1943 could be seen as a limit to the confidence he enjoyed from superiors, since he was not placed in command of a combat unit for the invasion of Europe. Most recent critics take aim at Wedemeyer's integrity and contributions to the Victory Program, and though the arguments presented against Wedemeyer's legacy deserve examination, the critiques do not take away from the value of his foreign staff college experience.<sup>57</sup>

Wedemeyer's legacy as a wartime leader reached its apex in 1944 when Marshall appointed him to succeed General "Vinegar" Joe Stilwell in China. Wedemeyer's reputation for interacting well with leaders of allied nations continued to be held in high regard, especially by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek himself.<sup>58</sup> Later in life, for his work on behalf of the Republic of China, he received an honorary PhD from the China Academy in Taiwan. In his letter to the President of the Academy, his reflections on war indicate the depth and breadth of his professional education, quoting Greek philosophers, Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, and even William T.

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public and personal life.

<sup>57</sup> James Lacey, *Keep from All Thoughtful Men: How U.S. Economists Won WWII* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 8-10. Lacey specifically accuses Wedemeyer of being self-aggrandizing and his later biographers, both Mark Watson in 1950 and Charles Kirkpatrick in 1992, as conveniently overlooking gaps in official records regarding mobilization estimates with respect to the Victory Program that question the general's integrity. See also, General Albert C. Wedemeyer, interview by Don H. Hampton, 14 March 1984, Project Number 1984-1 (Mobilization Planning), interview session 1, transcript (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College/US Military History Institute's Mobilization Planning Program, 1984) for Wedemeyer's responses to a direct line of questioning regarding how he arrived at mobilization estimates.

<sup>58</sup> "Tough Spot for a Soldier," newspaper clipping, newspaper title not present, Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 7, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University. This newspaper clipping extolling General Wedemeyer also references his time in Germany, "In a way, it is one of the ironies of the professional soldiers' life that finds General Wedemeyer in China, while so many of his comrades are preparing for the final assault on Germany. General Wedemeyer is one of the best-informed men on Germany in the Army. He attended the German War College for two years in a period immediately preceding the war, numbering among his classmates and instructors the ranking officers - or those who remain alive - Hitler's army. He was one of General Marshall's chief planners of the operations which began in Africa and ended with the Normandy landings."

Sherman that the need for military force would be reduced if political, economic, and psycho-social instruments of national policy could be brought together in a “timely and intelligent manner.”<sup>59</sup> He again referred to his long-held definition of strategy as, “the art and science of employing all of a nation’s resources to accomplish objectives defined by national policies.”<sup>60</sup> His time at a foreign staff college observing Nazi Germany’s unsuccessful strategy for war formed the basis for this definition.

Wedemeyer remained an active figure in public life, often involved in the debate over who in the American government was responsible for losing China, and later North Korea, to communism. His legacy, particularly with regards to Cold War military policy, remain controversial. Wedemeyer’s relationship with Marshall strained after the latter was appointed as Secretary of State in January 1947. That same year, Wedemeyer submitted a report on the precarious situation in the Chinese civil war, in which he advocated supporting the Nationalists with “selective economic and military aid” to prevent a communist takeover.<sup>61</sup> When the administration opted to adopt what Wedemeyer referred to as a “wait and see” policy with regards to China, he felt the State Department, led by his old boss Marshall, buried his report and its recommendations.<sup>62</sup> He retired from military service in 1951 as the three-star commander of

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<sup>59</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, letter to President Chang Chi-yun, 15 July 1977, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>60</sup> Albert C. Wedemeyer Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, letter to President Chang Chi-yun, 15 July 1977, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

<sup>61</sup> Keith E. Eiler papers, 1808-2003, Box 1, Folder 4, “American Heritage”, Interview by Keith E. Eiler with General AC Wedemeyer draft of 29 November 1982, Hoover Institution Archives, 40.

<sup>62</sup> Keith E. Eiler papers, 1808-2003, Box 1, Folder 4, “American Heritage”, Interview by Keith E. Eiler with General AC Wedemeyer draft of 29 November 1982, Hoover Institution Archives.

the Sixth Army at the Presidio in San Francisco, but would be promoted to four-star in retirement.<sup>63</sup>

Albert C. Wedemeyer passed away at age 92 in 1989, but his legacy was what John Keegan called, “One of the most intellectual and farsighted military minds America has ever produced,” continues to evoke inspiration and inquiry.<sup>64</sup> Of course, General Wedemeyer is just one datum amongst hundreds, perhaps thousands, of officers who have since attended foreign staff colleges, but his story and example stand out as a glimpse of the possible impacts those who possess such an education and experience can have on national security. With General Wedemeyer’s example in mind, the next section examines the program as it currently exists and identifies some of the challenges it faces in grooming the next generation of would-be Wedemeyers.

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<sup>63</sup> *The Madera Tribune*, Volume 60, Number 63, 15 June 1951, 1.

<sup>64</sup> John Keegan, “General Albert C. Wedemeyer, 92, Noted Military Planner for U.S.,” *The New York Times*, 20 December 1989.

## Domestic and Foreign Staff Colleges Today

The [Schools of Other Nations] program's aim is to develop closer U.S. Army/foreign army relationships by placing U.S. Army ILE and SSC eligible officers in foreign command and staff colleges, war colleges, or national defense universities on a PCS basis.

—Army Regulation 350-1, 2014

In 1881, General William Tecumseh Sherman helped establish a course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to train Infantry and Cavalry officers. Since its inception, the instruction at the school, as well as its name, evolved to focus on meeting the Army's need for commanders and general staff officers with the right education to win the nation's wars. As indicated in Peter Schifferle's *America's School for War*, Command and General Staff College (CGSC) made significant advances to ensure its staff college graduates would be better prepared for division and Corps level operations that defined modern warfare in the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Staff college education today remains an essential part of the typical twenty-year career for US Army officers. The US Army CGSC mission is to "educate, train and develop leaders for Unified Land Operations in a Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational operational environment; and advances the art and science of the profession of arms in support of Army operational requirements."<sup>66</sup> All commissioned officers must complete Intermediate Level Education (ILE) through either distance education courses or by in-residence attendance. The in-residence course at Fort Leavenworth is reserved for roughly the top half of each peer year group. The US Army selects approximately 1,000 officers from all branches to attend along with members from sister services, government organizations, and international militaries. The

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<sup>65</sup> Peter Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 10-14.

<sup>66</sup> United States Army Combined Arms Center homepage, last modified 5 February 2015, accessed 12 December 2015, <http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/cace/cgsc/mission>.

resident course routinely produces future senior military officers that have included Chiefs of Staff, heads of state, and other government leaders.<sup>67</sup> Other options for ILE completion are sister service staff colleges in the United States or foreign staff colleges. This section describes the official US Army documents that govern the officer education system and the expectations for all ILE graduates, regardless of method of completion. It then examines the SON program that manages US Army officers who complete ILE at foreign staff colleges in lieu of attending the Fort Leavenworth course. Finally, this section reviews some of the challenges and benefits the current program faces, and offers considerations for assessing the value and opportunity cost for sending officers abroad.

Through the authority derived from US Code, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issues policy governing the goals and content of ILE across all of the military services.<sup>68</sup> Education, as defined in the most recent policy issued in May 2015, “conveys general bodies of knowledge and develops habits of mind applicable to a broad spectrum of endeavors.”<sup>69</sup> Education differs from training by focusing on the cognitive domain of learning, while the latter focuses on the psychomotor domain in order to enhance the learner’s ability to perform functions and tasks; however, the two approaches to learning are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, elements of education and training, at least in US PME schools, are both used to increase officer competence and knowledge.<sup>70</sup> The US Army complies with the Chairman’s policy directive by overseeing CGSC, and he ensures that the course develops officers with expertise and knowledge

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<sup>67</sup> US Army Combined Arms Center, International Hall of Fame, accessed 12 October 2015, [http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/cace/IMSD\\_IHOFCountry.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/cace/IMSD_IHOFCountry.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction. *Officer Professional Military Education Policy*, CJCSI 1800.01E, 29 May 2015, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, A-3.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

appropriate to their grade.<sup>71</sup> US Army Regulation 350-1 is part of this body of policy and provides guidance for US Army officer education requirements. The policies governing the officer education system are responsive to changes to meet the services' needs. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the respective services may expand, contract, or eliminate programs in order to provide the desired type educated officer. This fact bears on the problem at hand and makes the endeavor to get the most value out of the School of Other Nations (SON) program relevant and important.

#### Governing Bodies and Prioritizing Partner Nations

The two main bodies that cooperate to administer the process of sending US Army officers to foreign staff colleges are the SON office, under the Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA), Deputy Chief of Staff (DCS), G-3/5/7 Strategy, Plans and Policy Directorate, and the Theater Armies' headquarters across the globe. The G-3/5/7 is the higher proponent for the SON program and authorizes SON to provide the resource planning, programming, and budgeting for foreign staff college education. The Theater Armies, such as US Army Pacific (USARPAC) or US Army Europe (USAREUR), determine the priorities for which foreign schools should host US students. These commands then benefit from having graduates of foreign staff colleges assigned in that Theater Army's Area of Responsibility.<sup>72</sup> The Theater Armies determine the program focus based on their combatant command objectives, and then submit those prioritized programs to SON for approval. The stated intent of the program is to:

Maintain US Army presence at selected partner nation institutions. The program's aim is to develop closer US Army/foreign army relationships by placing US Army ILE...eligible officers in foreign command and staff colleges, war colleges, or national defense universities on a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) basis.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Army Regulation, 350-1, 19 August 2014, 67.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 78.

There are several other implied outcomes for sending officers to foreign staff colleges, but the special emphasis on relationships is the foremost outcome from the Theater Armies' perspective. Similar to General Wedemeyer's experience, cross-country relationships are founded on time spent by the US officer in the foreign staff college classrooms, as well as during the afterhour's social opportunities that students create to bond with their classmates. Although a value of prolonged human interaction is not specifically quantifiable, survey results in the next section suggest that those relationships abide after graduation and continue over the course of the respective officers' careers. How does the US Army select individuals to embody the trinity of soldier, scholar, and diplomat from its rising field grade officers? How is it possible to measure if the US Army selects enough of the right people to best achieve the stated objective of this program? Considering the answers to these two questions frames further analysis of the program's value.

The majority of foreign staff colleges available for attendance by US Army officers are currently located in the US Army Europe and US Army Pacific theaters. These regions are host to the vast majority of our peacetime troops stationed overseas. However, as the focus of our national strategy evolves, changes in the staff college opportunities abroad should be flexible in order to match projected challenges. For example, if the national strategy truly balances to the Pacific, SON may advocate for more staff college seats at allied and partnered nations' schools in USARPAC, as opposed to USAREUR. Unfortunately, Theater Armies that are currently under-represented with foreign staff college graduates will continue to have fewer officers familiar with those areas of the world. Even a cursory look at the US Army's tangential role in public diplomacy in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America identifies gaps of knowledge and experience that could potentially be filled by expanding the foreign staff college education program.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 79.

## Selecting the Cohort

Each year, the US Army selects approximately two dozen officers to attend participating foreign staff colleges in order to fulfill their ILE requirement. Figure 2 displays participating schools in 2015. Some schools receive more than one US student. Partner nations that host US Army officers at their staff colleges offer a unique opportunity for the selected officers and their families to live abroad for one to two years, and immerse themselves in another culture (See Appendix 2).

Host Nation	Prerequisites	Length of Course (months)	Associated Theater Army
Argentina	Spanish DLPT 2/2/2; MFE only	12	USARSOUTH
Australia	English	12	USARPAC
Bangladesh	English	10	USARPAC
Baltic Defense College	English; MFE and MI only	11	USAREUR
Belgium	French/Dutch DLPT 2/2/2	10	USAREUR
Brazil	Portuguese DLPT 2/2/2	11	USARSOUTH
Canada	English; MFE only	10	USARNORTH
Chile	Spanish DLPT 2/2/2	11	USARSOUTH
France	French DLPT 2/2/2	12	USAREUR
Germany	German DLPT 2/2/2, MFE only	24	USAREUR
Ireland	English	11	USAREUR
Italy	Italian DLPT 2/2/2	10	USAREUR
Japan	Japanese DLPT 2/2/2	11	USARPAC
Kuwait	English; MFE only	10	USARCENT
Netherlands	Dutch DLPT 2/2/2	18	USAREUR
Singapore	English	11	USARPAC
Spain	Spanish DLPT 2/2/2	10	USAREUR

Figure 2. 2015 List of Available Foreign ILE Opportunities

*Source:* AHRC-OPL-L, Milper Message Number 15-006, “FY Army Competitive Category (ACC) Intermediate Level Education (ILE) Selection Board and Process for Submitting ILE Resident Attendance Preferences,” 7 January 2015.

In recent years, the US Army has begun to downsize its overall force structure to a target strength of 450,000 personnel.<sup>75</sup> Specialized programs, like sending officers overseas to receive

<sup>75</sup> Department of Defense, Press Release Number NR-268-15, 9 July 2015.

their staff college education, may be in jeopardy if the program's relevance and return on investment are not well articulated. One relevant return is the substantial life experience gained abroad at various foreign staff colleges that may, in turn, lessen the time officers need to orient themselves in foreign surroundings later. Another potentially positive effect of this program is that it gives the US Army a higher number of officers with worldwide peacetime experience upon which they can draw inspiration for creative approaches to complex problem-solving in times of war and crisis.

Soon after the promotion board for majors completes its selection of those officer who will be promoted, a second board convenes to determine where those selected majors will complete their requisite ILE. Prior to convening the latter board, the US Army allows officers to list their preferences for where they wish to complete ILE, to include any of the SON participating foreign staff colleges. Following release of the major's promotion list, HRC releases the ILE placement list to announce where those officers will attend their ILE. HRC typically releases lists in a timely manner to give the selected officers anywhere from six months to a year to move to their ILE. Those selected for foreign staff college are usually allowed to bring their families with them and must begin the process through the SON to ensure their administrative requirements are complete prior to relocating overseas.

Prior to 2014, officers selected to attend foreign staff colleges were required to attend a two-week course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The purpose of this course was not to condense the Fort Leavenworth resident course experience in its entirety, but provide some of the basic US Army doctrine these officers could be expected to know before starting their overseas education. Specifically, students would spend time familiarizing themselves with the most current operations manual, to include symbols and graphics that might be encountered in staff planning exercises with allied nations. The course did not produce doctrinal experts, but provided a common core

knowledge upon which the officers could build on during their foreign staff college education. The course underscored the US Army's desire for its officers to be exceptional representatives at host nation schools, but it also highlighted a gap in the professional military education with regards to doctrine. Another shortcoming of this quick orientation course was that graduates might not bring with them a doctrinal expertise equivalent to their American peers who attend the yearlong resident course, where instruction in US Army doctrine is a main subject. While students at the short course had the opportunity to form a cohort of classmates on similar career paths during the daily lessons, it did not include any family interaction or cultural learning specific to the various countries these officers would soon find themselves.

In 2014, the US Army cancelled the course at Fort Leavenworth and moved the two-week common core class to distance learning via an individual internet-based course. Online learning certainly has cost-savings benefits that eliminate the need to transport and house those students heading to foreign staff colleges for two weeks at Fort Leavenworth. However, the opportunity cost includes the loss of a chance to bond with US Army peers, but more significantly, it distances these board-selected students from the heart of Army intellectualism at Fort Leavenworth. Under the current system, these officers' classroom ILE experience will only be with their counterparts from other nations once they arrive at their respective foreign staff colleges. Fortunately, doctrinal references like *Doctrine 2015* are unclassified and readily available online. Should the officers have any questions regarding current US Army doctrine during their time at a foreign staff college, they can also contact the doctrine experts at CGSC at Leavenworth through email and discussion boards. The two weeks previously allotted for instruction on common CGSC material can now be used by the officer for leave, language instruction, or travel to the destination country, thus providing participants more flexibility in their staff college year abroad.

In 2015, seventeen partner nations offered staff college equivalent schooling to US Army officers. Of note, seven of the seventeen programs offered are taught in English, while the other ten require at least adequate proficiency in the language of the host nation.<sup>76</sup> Both the US Army and the partnered nation staff colleges benefit from the placement of US Army officers with the host nation's cohort of top-performing officers. Language ability is assessed prior to selection using either the general Defense Language Aptitude Battery, which measures the aptitude for learning languages other than English or the language-specific Defense Language Proficiency Test to determine an officer's current competence in a specific foreign language.

In the event a selected officer requires further language training to reach the level of proficiency required for a specific foreign staff college, he or she may be sent to the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, California or one of its satellite locations for a preparatory course. Sending an officer to the Defense Language Institute for language training can be both expensive and a lengthy process with courses for the most difficult languages lasting up to sixty-four weeks. If an officer is selected for a foreign staff college under the current program, but does not already have proficiency in the language of instruction, then DLI should be an option. However, potential applicants may consider the necessary time to acquire the foreign language an unacceptable risk because it further shortens the time the officer will later be available to complete key developmental (KD) positions as a major. The risk of falling behind peers for promotion leads many officers to not seriously consider attending a foreign staff college. If accepted officers are not afforded the opportunity to attend DLI, or advised against the extra time

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<sup>76</sup> Adequate language proficiency is defined here as a score of 2/2/2 (listening, reading, speaking, respectively) on the Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPT) in the language of instruction, as stated in Milper Message 15-006 dated 7 January 2015. 2/2/1+ are the required scores for students who complete the full period of instruction in all languages taught at DLI. Courses range from six to sixteen months depending on the difficulty rating of the foreign language. Categories I-IV, with IV being the most difficult. Of the courses that require a foreign language, most are Categories I and II, and only one (Japanese) is a Category IV language.

it would take to do so, the applicant pool narrows to those with pre-existing language ability who meet the language requirement without having to attend DLI.

Since language ability is a requirement for some of the foreign schools, applicants with otherwise outstanding performance records might not be highly competitive or interested at the time the board meets to select who the US Army will send abroad. If the best applicants are not routinely applying to attend foreign staff colleges, then the value of the program may decrease over time. Currently, the selection process favors those officers who have attained language proficiency on their own, either as heritage learners, or through their own learning endeavors prior to, or during, their first decade of service in the US Army. Formal language training paid for by the US Army is typically reserved for foreign area officers, or those on special programs, such as the Olmsted Scholarship. It is atypical that eligible applicants have had significant foreign language study prior to the board selection process for foreign staff college.<sup>77</sup> Though there will be self-starting officers who have taken it upon themselves to learn a foreign language outside of their US Army training, like Wedemeyer, they appear to be the exception rather than the norm.

Another important consideration that may hinder the growth, and therefore the resultant value, of the program is the typical major's timeline for completing those KD assignments necessary to remain competitive for promotion. Appendix 2 shows a typical timeline for an Infantry Branch major, the most populous group at the field grade rank, and therefore the most common. Based on the current promotion timeline, majors have about six years in which they must complete eighteen to twenty-four months in KD positions in order to be competitive for

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<sup>77</sup> US Army Human Resources Command, accessed 20 November 2015, <https://www.hrc.army.mil/officer/active%20duty%20fao%20accessions%20public%20-%20foreign%20area%20officer%20assignments%20branch%20fa48>. Foreign Area Officers, managed by Army Human Resource Command as Functional Area 48, are typically assessed out of their basic commissioning branch and assigned a specific region, or country, around their seventh year of service. Their training and education includes language instruction and a graduate degree from a civilian institution to increase their regional expertise.

promotion to lieutenant colonel.<sup>78</sup> Since 2014, CGSC has restricted attendance to the resident course admitting only those officers that HRC identifies as the top half of a cohort year group based on official performance reports. For those selected to attend, at least one of their eligible KD years will be spent in school at Fort Leavenworth, thus giving them only five years to complete their KD jobs. Unlike in Wedemeyer's case, the officers selected to attend a foreign staff college currently do so in lieu of attending the resident course at Fort Leavenworth, but receive the same credit for completing ILE. By comparison, if the selected officer already has foreign language ability for the program they are selected to attend, then there is no time lost compared to their peers, for those at foreign staff colleges that last one year, the amount of time it takes to complete CGSC.

The process of selecting the right candidates to attend foreign staff college is not readily apparent from published results of how or why certain officers were selected and others were not. Unlike the promotion boards, there do not appear to be guidelines or notes for prospective future candidates about how to best prepare themselves for selection to attend foreign staff college. If the program is of enduring value to the US Army, then the current attempt to select the best-qualified officers appears inadequate, particularly in its strategic messaging to advertise the potential benefits of selection to would-be applicants. In a time of downsizing, officers may equate attendance at the resident CGSC course with a better chance for future promotion. Foreign language prerequisites and potential promotion risk are two prominent challenges facing the SON's ability to select not just the right, but also the best, officers to experience an education abroad.

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<sup>78</sup> DA PAM 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 3 December 2014.

## Summary

This section introduced the School of Other Nations program that sends US Army officers to foreign staff colleges based on the educational mandate derived from the CJCSI, and identified the US Army's current approach to selecting participants for foreign staff college education. While all officers are allotted the opportunity to apply for foreign staff college opportunities, many may perceive that the risk of going overseas for ILE outweighs the potential benefit. Those risks include not joining their year's cohort of US Army resident CGSC graduates, as well as losing a year of potential KD time while acquiring foreign language proficiency. The current program relies heavily on applicants who already possess language ability, and as a result, those selected to represent the US Army at partner nation schools may not accurately represent the officers with the best record of service performance. Instead, the foreign language requirement becomes the primary eligibility factor to attend the non-English schools that are located primarily in areas of the world where the US has fewer long-standing allies, like the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. If increasing soft power, as Nye describes, can help the US Army accomplish its missions short of using hard power, then there remains room for optimizing this program by sending more, language-trained officers to engage foreign staff colleges around the world.

The US Army should prioritize where US Army officers attend a foreign staff college based on Theater Armies' need for experience, expertise, and relationships with regional partners. If US Army officers ascribe long-term value in foreign staff college attendance and view the program as a necessary component of future strategic leaders' education, then the potential for increased soft power use in military public diplomacy is possible. Officers destined for influential leadership roles are more likely to compete for the opportunity if the perception in the US Army is that the program is highly coveted and valued. Building also on Khanna's ideas, the current system may not be inclusive enough to offer the majority of English-only officers the chance to

develop sufficient cross-cultural knowledge and competence, specifically in areas of the world deemed vital to our national security interests.

The next section examines feedback regarding the utility and value of this program, and whether or not that value can be further optimized. The feedback suggests that expanding the program will lead to more strategic-minded leaders. However, optimizing the program hinges on the US Army organization's cultural recognition of value in both the program and its graduates.

## Reflective Practitioners

In a world where our operations are more and more intertwined with forces from lands far from our own, having officers with more than just a small town farm boy comprehension of the world is an asset, and yes, I grew up in a small town working on farms, so I am qualified to make that statement.

—Anonymous LTC, 2006 Foreign Staff College Graduate, Survey Respondent

In order to assess whether the staff college exchange program adds value to the US Army, the author conducted an online, cross-sectional survey of US Army officers who attended foreign staff colleges since 2005.<sup>79</sup> A key finding was that 95% of survey respondents indicated that their participation in the SON program provided value to the US Army. The survey used content analysis to capture the value of their experience in the context of when they attended the schools, and how those experiences affected their contributions to the US Army in the following years.<sup>80</sup> US Army Human Resource Command provided rosters for those officers who attended foreign schools, and the US Army Combined Arms Center, Leader Development and Education (CAC-LD&E) approved the research method and assigned the protocol approval number 15-12-002.<sup>81</sup> Through the global email address system, the author contacted those officers with valid email addresses in order to present them with the voluntary survey about their experience.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 66-67. A cross-sectional survey occurs when data is collected at a single point in time, as opposed to a cohort design which runs over a much longer time frame, or a comparison group design which compares different groups based on their unique variables with respect to the other group.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 89. Fink defines content analysis as, “A method of analyzing qualitative data for the purpose of drawing inferences about the meaning of recorded information such as the open-ended responses and comments made by survey respondents.”

<sup>81</sup> This survey did not include the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, although applicants for the SON program are often sent to this school because the instruction is in Spanish with many Central and South American students. It falls outside the scope of this study because it is located in the United States at Fort Benning, Georgia, and does not provide the foreign society interaction innate to schools on foreign soil.

Results from the survey remain confidential, though the answers to different questions were used to analyze the foreign staff college program and experience.

### Results of the Data

Out of the 176 foreign staff college graduates identified, ninety-four initially started the survey, with eighty-two completing the survey with varying amounts of detail to open-ended questions.<sup>83</sup> A complete summary of the survey statistics can be found in Appendix 4. The author retains complete answers for record. Here, the author presents trends in the responses in order to assess the SON program value from its participants' perspectives.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of responses by commissioning cohort year group, and Figure 4 shows the distribution of the year when respondents graduated from foreign staff college.

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<sup>82</sup> Floyd J. Fowler, *Survey Research Methods*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 83.

<sup>83</sup> R.M. Groves, "Experiments in producing nonresponse bias," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70(5), 2006, 720-736, as quoted in Floyd J. Fowler, *Survey Research Methods*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 177. For this survey, there was only a 53% response rate of the sample population made available for contact. Although error due to nonresponse can be large, the amount of error is not highly correlated with the response rate. Therefore, it is hard to say when a response rate is too low to be of use. The author concedes a credibility concession with a seemingly high non-response rate, but feels this compromise does not essentially detract from the value of the survey responses.

## Distribution of Respondents by Year Group

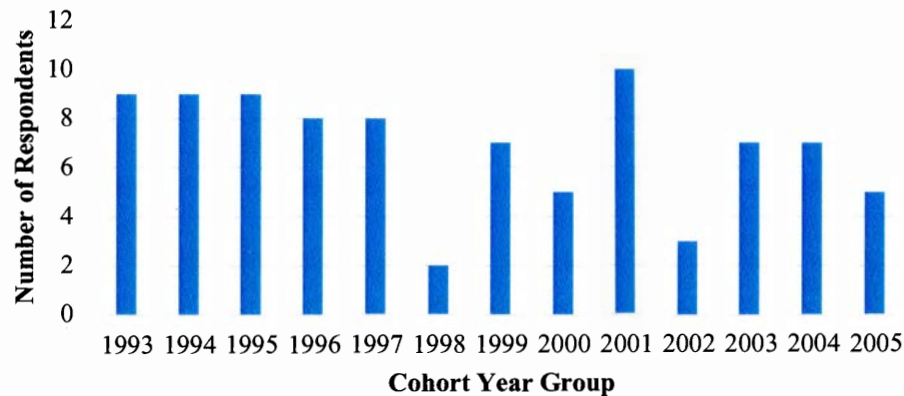


Figure 3. Cohort Year Group

Source: Data from *Foreign Staff College Graduate Survey 2016*

Of the thirteen year groups surveyed, 2001 had the most responses, and these officers happen to all be in their primary zone for consideration for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in 2016. Unfortunately, the timing and scope of this research does not correlate foreign staff college attendance to promotion success. However, some responses voluntarily addressed future promotion, and those that did all believed that foreign staff college attendance positively affected their promotion potential. As an interesting datum, one person surveyed believes the experience contributed to all Above-Center-of Mass (ACOM) officer evaluation reports in the years after graduation, as well as a below-the-zone selection to Colonel. His success was in spite of his career managers warning that the experience would be “detrimental” to his career due to its effect on his timeline.

## Year Respondents Graduated from Foreign ILE

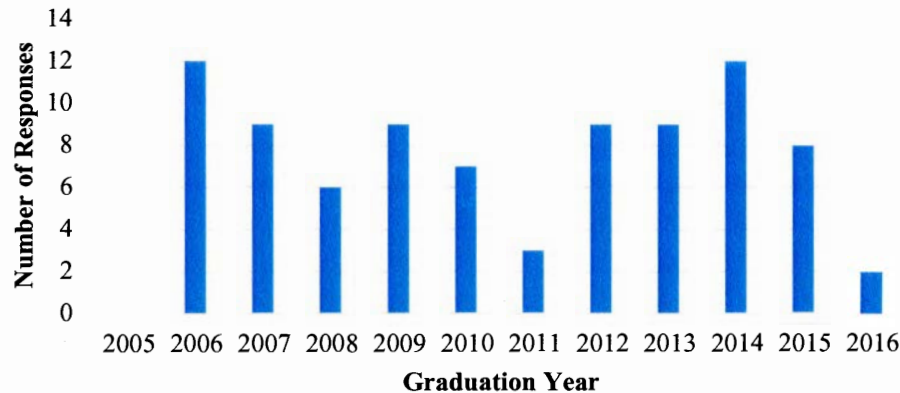


Figure 4. Foreign Staff College Graduation Year

*Source:* Data from *Foreign Staff College Graduate Survey 2016*.

Figure 4 shows a preponderance of responses from the graduates of 2006 and 2014; however, all year groups queried returned multiple responses. Several comments from graduates of different classes indicate those who applied for foreign staff college did so at a time when CGSC was open to all majors, as opposed to a board selected group, thus creating a waiting list for attendance at Fort Leavenworth. Unaffectionately referred to as the “no major left behind” years, many applicants to foreign staff colleges perceived CGSC to lack the prestige and rigor of a highly selective foreign staff college. When asked specifically about why applicants chose a foreign staff college instead of CGSC, the following comments highlight two common themes, which were a competitive educational opportunity not offered to everyone, as well as a measured consideration for future career impact:

I elected to go to a foreign staff college for two reasons. The first reason was to be able to do something different during my career. I have not wanted to do the same thing as everyone else in the Army, but want to have unique experiences that most people in the U.S. are not able to experience. The second reason was the timing of when my branch manager had scheduled me to the US ILE. By attending a foreign school, I was able to attend a qualifying ILE, graduate from

SAMS, complete a utilization tour, and complete a key development job prior to the primary selection board for LTC.

Another representative response:

Part of the decision included an awareness that potentially I would miss out on a portion of the standard education or even relationship building that my peers were receiving and had the opportunity to make at Leavenworth. However, when General Petraeus briefed my cohorts who were slated to attend foreign staff colleges, he mentioned that we would be well-postured and he discussed the ‘decathlete’ concept of well-rounded leaders, and finished by communicating the idea that no one set path leads to success. Ultimately, I felt that the opportunity to attend a foreign staff college was simply an opportunity that my peers did not recognize or were even afraid to embark on.

86% of participants reported being moderately or very proficient in the host nation language of instruction prior to attending their respective foreign staff colleges, as indicated in Figure 5. Furthermore, 89% received more than three months of formal language training prior to attending school, as indicated in Figure 6. Only two respondents said they were inadequately prepared to participate in class due to language limitations, indicating that the SON screening criteria for language requirements are generally effective.

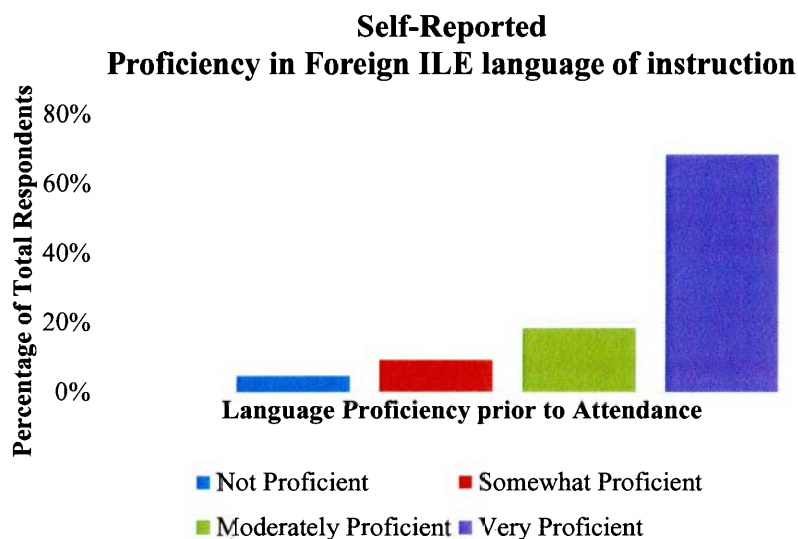


Figure 5. Language Proficiency prior to Attendance

Source: Data from *Foreign Staff College Graduate Survey 2016*.

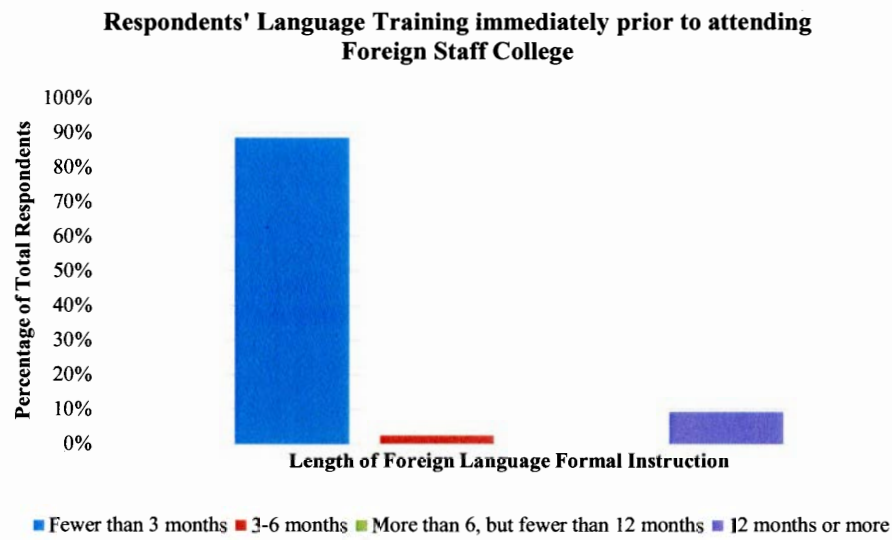


Figure 6. Foreign Language Formal Instruction

*Source: Data from Foreign Staff College Graduate Survey 2016.*

### Analyzing Value

Three of the twelve survey questions asked respondents to reflect on positive and negative aspects of their experience, and then comment on whether or not the experience added value to the US Army.

Unsurprisingly, 27% of open-ended negative comments centered on the opportunity cost of not interacting with US Army peers. While many enjoyed representing the US Army abroad, many lamented their inability to expand their organizational network at CGSC. A typical response was, “I was not able to develop contacts within my peer group. I also missed out on opportunities to interview with unit chiefs of staff and Human Resource Command during their visits to Fort Leavenworth.” However, no comment explicitly stated in hindsight that they would give up their foreign staff college experience to attend CGSC, but a couple did advocate officers being allowed to complete both, as opposed to one or the other.

The next two frequent themes regarding negative aspects of the program were administrative support from the US Army and the quality of classroom education in the foreign school, respectively. 25% of responses addressed poor support from the US Army administrative structures, leaving students to feel forgotten or disconnected while abroad. Students criticized the disconnect between SON and HRC for ensuring a Theater Army follow-on utilization assignment. Many were assigned to the region in which they completed their studies, but those who were not felt frustrated that there was no immediate leverage of their new international networks or expertise in the region. When not assigned to Theater Army utilization, one officer stated, “If anything, this experience did leave me somewhat confused as to why I was even sent [to a foreign staff college]...After returning to a brigade combat team, I found I was not as interested in being an Armor officer...I missed the international environment.” Student issues included the US Army Student Detachment’s slow support for pay and family healthcare, especially when the staff college location was not close to US Army bases. Additionally, poor personal knowledge of US Army doctrine led some to decry the US Army’s lack of educational focus on doctrine, and though not the primary negative program aspect, this sentiment was repeated enough to be noteworthy. 22% of respondents questioned the quality of the classroom education they received at various foreign staff colleges, typically due to ineffective instructors, slow-pace of instruction to cope with language gaps, or outdated material with respect to what the respondents felt their peers at Fort Leavenworth received.

Surprisingly, another recurring negative theme was the lack of comfort several officers experienced being a minority nationality in a multicultural setting, and having to frequently give their professional opinion on various US security and foreign policy issues. 7% made some reference to feeling unprepared for what one officer called “Stump the American,” and several wished they had been better coached on current US policy for strategic messaging to allies and potential adversaries. Unfortunately, little to no coordination with American Embassy personnel –

either defense attaches or state department officials – seems to occur in a planned, habitual manner. The officers did not seem to mind being the face and voice of the US Army, but many found themselves caught off guard and wondering what they should say to support US messages and policy in the region.

Despite some frustrations, the participants found overwhelming value to the US Army from their experience. When asked what value the US Army gained from sending them to a foreign staff college, most lauded the soft power they felt they were able to exert on host country nationals, as well as other international students from less friendly nations like China, Russia, Iran, and Syria. “Relationship building was invaluable. Putting a face to the US Army often changed the host foreign students thoughts and perspectives on who we are as a military and as a people.” 59% of respondents regarded their foreign network of professionals as a valuable takeaway, and believed they could leverage those relationships in future operations.

A second positive theme from the survey, also central to this monograph’s hypothesis, was contextual intelligence that the individual officer could later contribute to his or her future roles. 83% of those surveyed indicated an increase in strategic thinking or regional expertise based on their experience. One officer stated that the US Army gained, “An officer with a broader operational and strategic perspective who can rapidly build a multinational team and work in a complex, multinational environment.” Another stated, “A more capable officer with more robust analytical skills and knowledge to enable [engagement] at the highest levels of operational and strategy roles.” Most comments like this centered on the officers feeling better prepared for the future and more confident in their ability to operate “without US infrastructure...in an international environment.”

## Summary

The results of the survey indicate 95% participant support for the hypothesis that the SON program adds value to the US Army, but subjective responses from officers who likely have

a personal interest in attributing meaning to their own experience has limitations. Nonetheless, this feedback is useful to evaluate the program holistically in a way that the US Army as an institution does not seem to capture at the moment. One poignant comment stated, “This, like many programs, is on cruise control and not being used properly as an element of soft power or influence.” Another mentions, “There was no feedback loop. After training concluded an [after action review] could have been required, lessons learned could have been harvested.

Organizational and personal profiles could have been developed or updated.” By capturing a segment of reflections from ten years’ worth of experience, this research provides the raw data analysis that can lead to better optimization and higher value returns to the US Army.

Soft power leverage through ongoing professional relationships, regional or host nation expertise, and deeper strategic thinking skills were the predominant values participants brought back to the US Army (See Appendix 4). Remarkably, no respondents questioned the host nation’s soft power success on changing their own views of the US Army or US foreign policy. An absence of reflection on host nation soft power speaks to a risk associated with overexposure to foreign cultures or sympathies that US officers may develop while studying abroad. This risk may be mitigated by providing a well-designed support structure, especially in light of the percentage of responses that criticized the current state of support. Contextual intelligence development, though not specifically referred to in the responses, was evident in the familiarity with other peoples and cultures that officers reportedly gained from living in a foreign society. However, the most lamented tradeoff was not having the year of quality education and peer networking one would gain by attending staff college in the United States. For now, officers may only attend an American staff college in lieu of a foreign staff college, but it may be beneficial to consider sending officers to both so as to reap lessons from various educational experiences.

When asked whether or not the program should be more widely available to US Army officers, 92% of respondents favored expanding the program, though 25% of those in favor

explicitly stated the need for a selection process to ensure SON sends the right officers. Many indicated that Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Foreign Area Officers ought to have priority for these schools because of their mission to foster relationships with foreign defense forces. Others felt that the program should be more widely available because leaders in all branches should have the opportunity to broaden their international experience before reaching high command. Most agreed that language capability must remain a requirement, even if it requires an expanded training opportunity prior to attendance. The data indicates that significant investment in language training is not a key component of the SON program's process for preparing students for foreign staff college, but in order to expand the program, it should be.

This section described negative and positive aspects of the SON program that add value to the US Army. It exposed some disconnect between the SON's mission statement and its execution based on the last ten years of experience. Improvements to talent management systems to align graduates within the Theater Armies could leverage more immediate soft power gained at foreign staff colleges. The US Army could also reap value from officers who are encouraged to apply their contextual intelligence, including language and cultural understanding, at follow-on assignments in their region of expertise. At the very least, the surveys identified a lack of a formalized feedback mechanism so that graduates' experiences are captured and reincorporated to improve the program and ensure it still produces value.

## Preparing for a Complex Future

Framing is the act of establishing the context of a situation within which a commander must act to realize strategic aims by examining the assigned problem from multiple perspectives. The art of framing the problem is the art of seeing the essential and relevant among the trivial and irrelevant; penetrating the logic of the broad received mission and its messy contextual situation; and reshaping it into a well-enough structured working hypotheses.

—TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500  
*The US Army Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design*, 2008.

### Conclusions

Throughout his life, General Wedemeyer reflected on his own contributions during his career of service, and keenly identified persistent problems with how Americans approach strategy. At the end of an interview in 1982, this insightful exchange regarding strategic thinking occurred between biographer Keith Eiler and General Wedemeyer:

Eiler: "General, as you look back on the history of your time, what thoughts, what feelings predominate? What can/should be done?"

Wedemeyer: "We Americans simply must become more forehanded and consistent in the way we manage our public affairs. Every one of us has a stake in this process and should play a part. The world today has shrunk. It has become an increasingly dangerous place... We cannot simply afford to sit back, let events take their course, and jump in with a military solution when a crisis gets out of hand. There are so many ways in which the course of events can be influenced without the use or threat of force. Economic, diplomatic, cultural, psychological, and other means are available in limitless variety. If all of these 'instruments of national policy' are employed in a timely, coordinated, and imaginative way, in accordance with a reasonably steady game plan, there is good reason to hope for progress toward a better world without the scourge of war."

Eiler: "I guess you are saying that we should all become strategists - in the broader sense of that term?"

Wedemeyer: "Precisely!"<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Keith E. Eiler papers, 1808-2003, Box 1, Folder 4, "American Heritage", Interview by Keith E. Eiler with General AC Wedemeyer draft of 29 November 1982, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University (for Wedemeyer), 44-45.

The general's decree strikes to the heart of this monograph and the critical need for the right education for strategic leaders in the military. Wedemeyer, a man of common career beginnings, became more than the product of his own experience through a personal commitment to education, but that was only half of the equation the US Army needed to reap the value he offered. The more important half was the US Army's institutional commitment to growing strategic thinkers when it first established the educational exchange program, and then selected Wedemeyer as the best candidate to attend. There was no prescient way for the US Army to know what the eventual return would be for sending Wedemeyer abroad, but by sending him and then a continuous stream of exchange officers on an annual basis, the US Army maintained a strategic foothold, not through technology and firepower, but through the contextual intelligence its officers gained while being educated abroad.<sup>85</sup>

The officer surveys conducted for this monograph attest to the value of foreign staff college education. The soft power leverage and contextual intelligence graduates gained, in most cases, readily translated into job placement and effectiveness. The topic of officer staff college education to meet the US Army's strategic challenges remains relevant and heatedly contested.

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<sup>85</sup> Jörg Muth, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901-1940, and the Consequences for World War II* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2011), 305. Several other American officers also attended the Kriegsakademie in the same period as Wedemeyer, and also produced reports of their experience, to include: "Captain Harlan Nelson Hartness, USMA 1919, from 1935 to 1937...Lieutenant Colonel H.F. Kramer from 1937 to 1939; and Major Richard Clare Partridge, USMA 1920, from 1938-1939. Most went through the two-year courses, Partridge received a shortened education because of the outbreak of the war." All three of these officers eventually retired as major generals, which Muth argues is a testament to the superior education they received at the Kriegsakademie versus their time at Fort Leavenworth's Command and General Staff School.

See also Peter J. Schifferle review of Muth, Jörg, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901-1940, and the Consequences for World War II* *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 69 No. 1 (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, Winter 2016):164-166 for critique of Muth's evidence, as well as Richard DiNardo, review of Muth, Jörg, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901-1940, and the Consequences for World War II*, H-German, H-Net Reviews, December 2013, accessed 1 February 2016, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=37741>.

For example, in a recent *Parameters*, Major Jason W. Warren, PhD, argues that the post-1950 US Army's proclivity for a tactically-focused paradigm devalued broadly educated leaders, and cost the nation a bench strength of strategic thinkers. The "centurion paradigm" he describes, embodied in General Creighton Abrams's focus on tactics during the Vietnam War, discounted the tradition of great American generals who were broadly experienced and educated.<sup>86</sup> The foreign staff college education program offers an intellectual line of effort that can link the self-reflective centurions of today to the strategic masterminds the US Army will need them to be in the future.

### Recommendations

The foreign staff college education experience develops both soft power leverage and the contextual intelligence that strategic leaders need to be effective in a complex world. Currently, the program is sub-optimized because it has not expanded into areas where weighted national security interests lie. Of note, in the PACOM AOR, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines do not offer staff college education to US Army officers, though their officers routinely attend CGSC at Fort Leavenworth. These countries represent three out of four US security treaty allies in PACOM, with Japan being the fourth (Appendix 1). In Europe, there is also a noticeable dearth of opportunities in former Soviet bloc states, though more substantial opportunities in Western Europe. There are currently only single digit participants in most other COCOMs, with none at schools in AFRICOM (See Appendix 1). While any program overhauls or major changes necessitate coordination, funding, and agreement beyond the scope of this monograph, it may be worthwhile to explore how a future program that could garner more value for the US Army might

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<sup>86</sup> Jason W. Warren, "The Centurion Mindset and the Army's Strategic Leader Paradigm," in *Parameters*, Vol. 45 No 3. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Quarterly, 2015): 27-38, 27.

look. Based on the key findings of the survey responses, the following recommendations suggest a way ahead.

**Recommendation 1:** The program should better align with foreseeable threats in light of the Army Operating Concept, specifically in Asia and Eastern Europe. The onus is on the Theater Armies to use their existing soft power with partnered nations to host more numerous and frequent US Army staff college students. This thrust should be accompanied with cogent narrative about the benefits for reciprocal education for professional officer populations, centered on shared national security interests that include alliances, interoperability of forces, and potential enemies.

**Recommendation 2:** Expand the charter of the SON program to specifically state that contextual intelligence is the metacompetency that foreign staff college graduates are expected to possess upon graduation which can then be converted into institutional value in a variety of ways. The current emphasis to maintain a forward US Army presence and to build relationships with host nation armies, which though important, does adequately address the program's value to the US Army.<sup>87</sup> Articulating why this program exists helps strengthen its future viability and focuses US Army leaders' understanding of potential return on investment. Moreover, a report for record to capture the students' experience and reflections, like Wedemeyer's G2 Report in 1939, should be a required product so the program receives feedback about the efficacy of its design.

**Recommendation 3:** The resident CGSC course should be a prerequisite for attendance at a foreign staff college. This would ensure that US Army officers have already been competitively selected for professional education based on their performance and promotion potential. It would also provide a one-year, standardized education in American doctrine prior to being sent abroad. Selected officers at CGSC would still have the opportunity to form a network

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<sup>87</sup> AR 350-1, 78.

of peers that many in the survey mentioned they missed out on by attending only a foreign staff college.

**Recommendation 4:** Consider making the program automatically available to the top 10% of each graduating CGSC class, roughly one-hundred students per year. An order of merit list at CGSC is already an annual endeavor and could easily identify the top contenders for the program, but potential to represent the heart and intellect of the US Army abroad may be more readily apparent in person than on the Officer Record Brief electronic resume. A final selection committee comprised of SON representatives, CGSC instructors, and representatives from the different COCOMs could conduct in-person interviews to assess the best fit officers for each associated school and region.

**Recommendation 5:** Organizational leaders must control the internal, strategic narrative. Senior leader support would be necessary to reassure selected officers that their broadened education is truly valued and that their professional timelines would be bolstered, rather than adversely affected, should they be selected to attend a foreign staff college. The Advanced Military Studies Program (AMSP) at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) is heralded as a worthwhile year of education for those selected to attend precisely because of the incentivized value it adds to both the individual and the organization. AMSP students are competitively selected, so are seen as the elite of CGSC. They typically forego immediate KD positions for a year of education, followed by a year of utilization. Their fears for promotion potential are assuaged by the value the institution places on the experience, which is echoed in the rhetoric of senior commanders, and reflected in the data of AMSP graduates who are selected for battalion command in greater percentage than their non-graduate peers.<sup>88</sup> In order for the SON

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<sup>88</sup> US Army Combined Arms Center, "SAMS Overview," *PowerPoint* Presentation, 3 August 2015, slide 6, accessed 4 February 2016, <https://partis.leavenworth.army.mil/student/SitePages/Home.aspx>. Data under the heading, "US Army Command Selection Analysis & Advanced Military Studies Program (AMSP) Graduates," show that from 2012 – 2014, AMSP graduates were selected for the primary command select list

program to reach its potential, it must appreciate that perceptions of the program's value affect both the quality of the applicant pool and the future effectiveness of its graduates.

Similar groundbreaking shifts in educational focus and effort are not without recent precedent. The US Army Strategic Planning and Policy Program (ASP3), established in 2011 under former CSA General Raymond Odierno, recently began sending some students to earn doctorates at foreign, English-speaking universities. The program's approach to broadly educating officers is not solely focused on the utilization of the officer's knowledge, but to exercise the officer's mind.<sup>89</sup> Educating strategic leaders ought to start earlier in the career timeline, but cannot replace tactical expertise. Tactical expertise and strategic thinking *must* coexist, but an officer's mind should be pliable enough to change focus several times throughout a career. With the ASP3 program in mind, future studies could look beyond staff colleges and examine the value of sending top CGSC graduates to complete advanced degrees at renowned foreign universities. For example, privately funded organizations, most notably the Olmsted Foundation, do just that on an annual basis through a highly selective process.<sup>90</sup> While American universities enjoy an esteemed reputation worldwide, foreign civilian and military leaders are often alumni or have strong ties to their own top-tier universities. An American officer with an

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at a 17%, 16%, and 10% higher frequency than their peers without AMSP, respectively. AMSP Army active alumni also include three generals, eight lieutenant generals, twelve major generals, and 15 brigadier generals. The concluding message is that attending AMSP does not hurt its graduates' careers.

<sup>89</sup> Gordon B. "Skip" Davis, Jr., Thomas C. Graves, and Christopher N. Prigge, "The Strategic Planning 'Problem'," *Military Review*, November-December 2013: 10-17, 17.

<sup>90</sup> As an example, in 2015, the CGSC George C. Marshall Scholar also earned the Olmsted Fellowship and is currently attending the Defense Language Institute to learn Mandarin Chinese. Following completion, MAJ Bolton will live in the People's Republic of China to earn an advanced degree from the prestigious Fudan University in Shanghai, known for its network of powerful private and public sector alumni. The Olmsted only accepts officers who have not yet reached their eleventh year of service, while the ASP3 is reserved for KD-complete majors and lieutenant colonels with typically more than twelve years of service.

academic pedigree offers just one more point of entry into a complex system where soft power leverage and contextual intelligence can be applied for strategic advantage later on.

Finally, increased investment in foreign staff college education is not a guarantee for annually producing strategic messiahs who will craft a Victory Program for the next century of *Pax Americana*. The ideas promulgated in this monograph are founded on exploring and amplifying unique educational experiences that add value to the force when individual officers apply their contextual intelligence upon their return. While abroad, there is an opportunity to expand US soft power, however, as scholar Giles Scott-Smith warns, “A certain amount of sober realism is always required,” with regards to the efficacy of public diplomacy through exchanges.<sup>91</sup> This educational program is an example and exercise in what Dietrich Dorner calls “efficiency diversity,” whereby several efficient ways are simultaneously considered in order to achieve the desired ends.<sup>92</sup> The US Army consistently states that producing adaptive, broadly educated officers is a strategic priority.<sup>93</sup> Foreign staff college education, deliberately arranged around the world in common purpose increases the probability of strategically adept leaders who can guide the organization in a complex world. It also makes those military leaders better prepared for contextualizing the national security effects of military options to civilian leaders. Unless a renewed emphasis on broadly educating tomorrow’s promising leaders takes hold in the

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<sup>91</sup> Scott-Smith, Giles, “The Heineken Factor? Using Exchanges to extend the reach of U.S. Soft Power,” *American Diplomacy, Commentary and Analysis*, 2011, accessed 12 October 2015, [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2011/0104/comm/scottsmith\\_heineken.html#\\_ednref15](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2011/0104/comm/scottsmith_heineken.html#_ednref15).

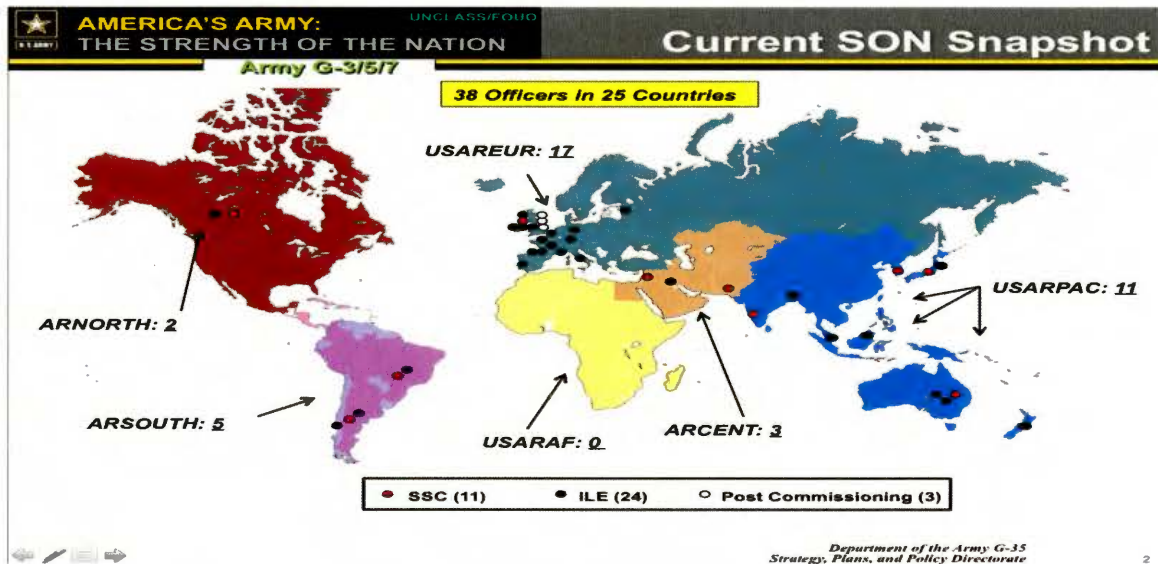
<sup>92</sup> Dietrich Dorner, *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 1996), 53.

<sup>93</sup> David G. Perkins, *Strategic Business Plan for the US Army* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: The Army Press, 2015), Appendix 2. See also, Raymond T. Odierno, 38<sup>th</sup> Chief of Staff of the Army, *Marching Orders*, January 2012, <http://www.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/232478.pdf>, accessed 1 February 2016; *Way Point #1*, January 2013, <http://www.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/280914.pdf>, accessed 1 February 2016; and *Way Point #2*, February 2014, <http://www.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/332325.pdf>, accessed 1 February 2016.

contemporary US Army, strategic disappointments despite tactical overmatch are likely to continue.

## Appendix 1

### July 2015 SON Snapshot



July 2015 distribution of Army Officers attending Foreign Professional Military Education Institutions by Theater Army

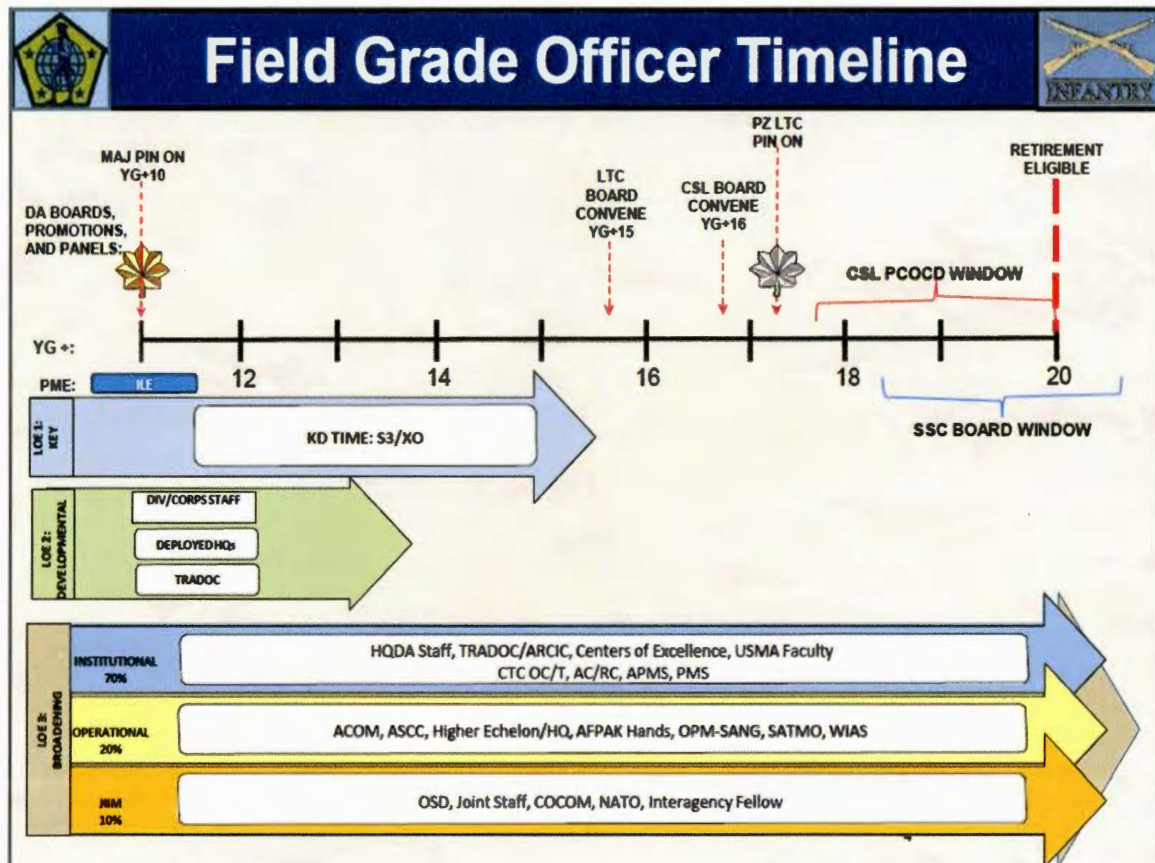
Source: John Wirick, "20150730 SON Program Brief," PowerPoint presentation (Washington, DC: Army International Affairs Division, HQDA, G-35-R, 2015).

Fortunately, there is a process for the different Theater Armies to apply for new partner nation schools to be added to the annual list of participating staff colleges. For that reason, attendance may change for schools and regions from year to year. For a partner nation school to be considered, it must first meet the US Army security cooperation objectives laid out in the HQDA and Army Service Component Command Campaign Support Plans. Potential partner nations must then work with SON to complete a formal proposal that details the scope and cost of the foreign staff college nominated to host US Army officers.

Once a new participating school is approved, ASCCs coordinate directly with HQDA, DCS, G-3/5/7 Budget Analyst and the Army International Division for the administration of funds. Each ASCC manages and executes its separate SON budget to support student travel and other administration of those funds. Once the coordinating proponent at the respective ASCC completes the details, the announcement of available seats for potential students is announced in an annual Military Personnel message via HRC to all eligible officers.

## Appendix 2

### Infantry Field Grade Officer Career Timeline



Source: US Army Human Resource Command, *Professional Officer Timeline*, PowerPoint presentation (Fort Knox, KY: US Army Human Resources Command, Infantry Branch, 2015), accessed 2 February 2016, <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/assets/directorate/opmd/professional%20timelines%201.pd> f.

The first Line of Effort (LOE 1), depicted by the large blue arrow, indicates the five years a typical officer has to complete their ILE, as well as twenty-four months of Key Developmental assignments before their Lieutenant Colonel board convenes. As indicated in several surveys, a current drawback of the SON program is how language training and a one year of additional staff college disrupts the standard the timeline.

### Appendix 3

#### Survey Summary

Survey Statistics	
Invited	176
Started	94
Response Rate	53%
Completed	82
Completion Rate	87%
Drop Outs (After Starting)	12

*Source:* Data from *Foreign Staff College Graduate Survey 2016*

*Purpose:* The purpose of this study is to evaluate responses from US Army officers who are graduates of foreign staff colleges in the last eleven years to determine whether or not the program adds value to the US Army.

*Research Design:* A cross-sectional survey of 176 foreign staff college graduates between the years 2005 and 2015. Considerations for the advantages of internet surveys were primarily the low cost of data collection and the high speed of returns. The author acknowledges several disadvantages, such as the sample size being limited to internet users with good email addresses and difficulty enlisting cooperation (*See Fowler, 83*). Over the course of the one month that the survey remained available, a total of three messages were sent to the sample population. First, a message with an introduction and the link to the survey. Second, a reminder to those who had not responded after two weeks. Third, a final reminder a several days before the survey closed. These reminders were an attempt to increase the response rate.

*Survey:* Online, self-administered survey conducted during January and February 2016.

*Respondents:* A 53% response rate was obtained. Of the respondents, 87% completed the survey, while some who did not complete the survey in its entirety did provide some answers to specific questions. Respondents were selected from a list of those identified by HRC to have graduated from a foreign staff college in the last eleven years (2005-2015).

*Main outcome:* Support for the hypothesis that foreign staff college education adds value to the US Army.

*Results:* 95% of foreign staff college graduates surveyed felt the program adds value to the US Army in various ways. Only 5% of respondents reported no value added to the US Army from their experience at a foreign staff college. Of the themes referencing value added to the US Army, 34% of answers indicated an increase in strategic thinking or appreciation of strategic context, 49% indicated a deeper regional or host nation expertise, and 59% indicated a newly developed, ongoing relationship with a network of international officers.

*Conclusions:* Foreign staff college education does add value to the US Army. Graduates of foreign staff colleges were able to articulate that value through their responses. Subsequent research could attempt to apply more quantitative metrics to measure value where this monograph applied qualitative analysis.

## Survey Questions

1. Statement of Consent
2. What is your current Year Group?
3. Did you graduate from a foreign staff college?
4. What year did you graduate from a foreign staff college?
5. When selected to attend a foreign staff college, how proficient were you in the foreign language capability required at the participating school?
6. How many months of formal language training did you receive immediately prior to starting school?
7. Please explain why you elected to attend a foreign staff college in lieu of a US staff college equivalent?
8. Describe any lasting effect your foreign staff college experience had on your military career.
9. What were the positive aspects of attending a foreign staff college?
10. What were the negative aspects of attending a foreign staff college?
11. In your opinion, what value has the US Army gained from sending you to attend a foreign staff college?
12. Should more officers be offered the opportunity to attend foreign staff colleges and why?

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